

John Caldwell Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, January 23, 1820, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

SECRETARY CALHOUN TO JACKSON.

Private

War Department, January 23, 1820.

Dear Sir, I have received your private letter in relation to your Nephew Cadet, Andrew J Donelson,¹ now at West Point. Under existing regulations,

¹ See vol. II., p. 275, note.

the regular examination will take place in June, at which time, your nephew will be entitled to promotion, and if you would permit me to offer my advice, I would suggest it as the most advisable for him to remain till that time, unless Congress should authorise military operations against Florida previous to that period. Your nephew stands very high, and will, if he continues till the regular examination, be placed, in all probability, among the first of the Cadets, which will give him the right to select the corps in which he may choose to serve. Should he leave the academy before the examination, he will loose this advantage. The advantage of making a campaign under your immediate observation, should Congress authorise operations this Spring, would doubtless much more than counter ballance that, which I have stated, but, if they should not, I think you would find the course, which I have suggested, as the most advisable. If, however, you should still be desirous of his return to Tennessee in April, I will with pleasure grant the permission which you request.

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I entirely agree with you, as to the importance of Cuba to our country. It is, in my opinion, not only the first commercial and military position in the world, but is the key stone of our Union. No American statesman ought ever to withdraw his eye from it; and the greatest calamity ought to be endured by us, rather than it should pass into the hands of England. That she desires it, and would seize it, if a fair opportunity presented itself, I cannot doubt; and that, such an event would endanger our union, is to me very manifest. These are my fixed opinions. Should our relation with Spain end in a rupture, we ought to be prepared immediately, at the very commencement of the hostilities, to seize on it, and to hold it for ever. On the contrary, I think there are strong reasons, why we ought, at first, to limit our operations to Florida, and rest there for the present, unless Spain should choose to come to a rupture with us; or that the designs of England on it, Cuba, should become sufficiently manifest.

Congress has not evinced so much feeling on these important points, as I expected. The subject of Florida appears for the present to sleep, tho' I can not doubt, that, before the termination of the session, they will authorise the President to occupy it.

With sentiment of sincere esteem and respect